not only during the night but also during the day, especially during winter. Hence, the low temperature conditions compel this nocturnal animal to emerge from its hollow for thermoregulation through basking.

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3. USE OF PALM FRONDS FOR NEST SITES BY THE NORTHERN PALM SQUIRREL *FUNAMBULUS PENNANTII* WROUGHTON

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The Northern Palm Squirrel *Funambulus pennantii* Wroughton is a common squirrel in northern India (Gurung and Singh 1996; Menon 2003; Prakash 1994). At night, it takes shelter in small cavities in trees, crevices in walls, and sometimes uses letter boxes and electric meter boxes in houses (Prakash 1994). The female prefers tree holes and cavities in walls for placing nests (Roberts 1997).

However, on June 5, 2008, I recorded an active nest of *F. pennantii* placed on the upper surface of a slanting frond of a Chinese Palm *Livistona chinensis* (Fig. 1) in Gulab Bagh Zoo, Udaipur. The to and fro movements of the female were visible, and also the vocalization of the infants. The nest was cylindrical with a tapering entrance, the shape due to conduplication of the palm leaf which resulted in an open tunnel-like space in the middle of the fan-like frond of the palm. Conduplication is a natural 'folding' in palm leaves which provide space for nesting. The cavity formed by conduplication was occupied by the squirrel for her nest.

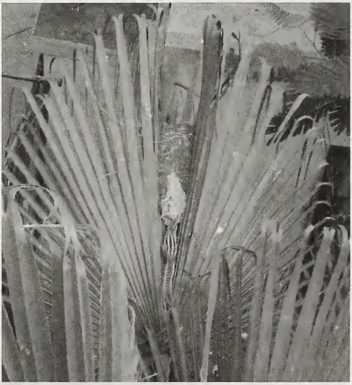

Fig. 1: A female Northern Palm Squirrel close to her epifoliar nest

Besides the nest, an old nest (probably of the previous year) was also present on another frond of the same tree. These two records show that the Northern Palm Squirrel also makes nests in fronds of palms, other than those reported in cavities in trees, buildings, among others.

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4. PREDATION ON NORTHERN HOUSE GECKO *HEMIDACTYLUS FLAVIVIRIDIS* RÜPPELL BY FEMALE NORTHERN PALM SQUIRREL *FUNAMBULUS PENNANTII* WROUGHTON

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The Northern Palm Squirrel *Funambulus pennantii* Wroughton is a common squirrel in northern India and is commensal to man (Prater 2005). On April 25, 2012, we observed a Northern Palm Squirrel struggling with a Northern House Gecko *Hemidactylus flaviviridis* on a *durry* (sort of carpet) spread in the playground of a college in Jaisalmer, Rajasthan.

To get a better look, we quickly went closer, and were surprised to see that the squirrel had overpowered and killed the lizard by that time. The autotomized tail lying slightly away from the site, and the squirrel was eating the lizard from the end of the broken tail. On being disturbed by us, it carried away the gecko, climbed a chair, and continued feeding on it. Almost all the fleshy parts, ribs and bones of the limbs, except the digestive tract, some bones of vertebral column and parts of the skull were eaten away by the squirrel. The squirrel left after eating the prey. The whole event was over within ten minutes.

Later, we followed the squirrel and found that it was engaged in nest building, and that it was a female with a large abdomen, probably in an advanced stage of pregnancy.

The Northern Palm Squirrel is generally considered a herbivorous rodent that feeds on fruits, seeds, leaves, etc. However, the females of rodents require protein and mineral rich food during their breeding season (Challahan 1993; Mattingly and McClure 1982; Payne and Wheeler 1968; Veloso and Bozinovic 2000). Meat eating by ground-dwelling squirrels is a well established fact (Bailey 1923; Friggen 2002; Morgart 1985; Packard 1958; Wistrand 1972). Some studies have also shown that pregnant and lactating squirrels feed on bones to fulfill their requirement of calcium and phosphorus (Carlson 1940; Coventry 1940). *Funambulus pennantii* is also reported to kill and eat birds (Tiwari 1990). Thus, requirement of protein must have caused this large herbivore to feed on the lizard.

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